

# Exhibit C

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### As portrait of Jared Loughner sharpens, 'vitriol' blame fades

The suggestion that the shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords Saturday might have been influenced by political 'vitriol' seems less likely as more becomes known about suspect Jared Loughner.

By Patrik Jonsson, Staff writer | JANUARY 12, 2011

The wave of national soul-searching about the level of political vitriol and how it might have played a part in Saturday's shootings in Tucson, Ariz., now appears to be ebbing.

Following the shooting, which left six people dead and apparently targeted Rep. Gabrielle Giffords (D) of Arizona, Pima County Sheriff Clarence Dupnik suggested that "vitriol ... about tearing down the government" might have played a part. Rep. Robert Brady (D) of Pennsylvania has followed that lead, promising a bill that would outlaw threatening language against lawmakers.



Neighbors check out the media set up at the Loughner home in Tucson, Ariz., Tuesday. Jared Loughner is the alleged gunman in the shooting of Rep. Gabrielle Giffords and others on Saturday, leaving six dead and more injured. (Ross D. Franklin/AP)

But emerging information about primary suspect Jared Loughner suggests that he was motivated not by a climate of hate but rather by his own troubled mind and a personal vendetta against Congresswoman Giffords, who was injured in the attack. The investigation has not concluded, and more information could come to light. But for now, a majority of Americans are dismissing the notion that the shooter was set off by a Sarah Palin political map, tea party anger, or talk about "second amendment remedies."

A CBS poll Tuesday showed 57 percent of Americans don't believe political rancor played any role in the attack, with a plurality of Democrats, Republicans, and Independents agreeing.

Indeed, one piece of evidence collected so far is a 2007 letter from Giffords's office to Mr. Loughner, thanking him for attending a meet-and-greet event. On it is scrawled a death threat to Giffords. In 2007, Sarah Palin was a little-known Alaska governor and the tea party movement did not exist.

At this point, then, the left's initial eagerness to link the shooting to political anger on the right could backfire, says Charles Franklin, a pollster and political scientist at the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

"It was the immediate connection from the left of this shooting to political rhetoric from the right that polarized this, and here we have a case where there's a rush to blame Palin [and other conservatives] with no direct connection to her at all,"

he says. "And the more we learn about this guy, it seems there isn't any political motivation in a broader sense."

To be sure, Sheriff Dupnik put the issue on the national plate with his comments, and given that that the shooting appears to be a political assassination attempt in a politically rancorous border district, the debate on political tone was, in many ways, inevitable.

But critics point out that the nation largely refrained from linking Maj. Nidal Malik Hassan – the suspect in the 2009 Fort Hood shootings – with terrorism.

In Loughner's case, no reported evidence so far suggests any connection to the ideology or ideologues of the right. A Loughner friend, Zach Osler, told ABC's "Good Morning America" on Wednesday that Loughner "did not watch TV. He disliked the news. He didn't listen to political radio. He didn't take sides. He wasn't on the left. He wasn't on the right."

That doesn't mean the issue of political rancor is unimportant, and some commentators are simply using this moment to argue that – regardless of the facts of the current case – political anger can have outsized effects on troubled minds.

"Among elite circles there is a sharp debate going on about [connections to campaign rhetoric]," says Mr. Franklin. "So we're seeing some people who deny that political rhetoric had any connection to the shooting, but who nonetheless are speaking out about the question of civility and the level of rhetoric, and they're coming from both the left and the right."

In a commentary today, the Rev. Jesse Jackson drew a comparison between Alabama Gov. George Wallace's heated rhetoric around race relations and its role in fueling the bombing of a Birmingham church that killed four young black girls in 1963.

"There is no evidence that Jared Loughner ... was a member of a right-wing hate group," Mr. Jackson writes. "He was clearly a young man whose mind was unraveling. But it is exactly the mentally unstable who are most likely to be influenced by an atmosphere filled with hate and murderous rhetoric."

Sarah Palin made the boldest pushback yet in a video released Wednesday. "Acts of monstrous criminality stand on their own. They begin and end with the criminals who commit them, not collectively with all the citizens of a state," Ms. Palin said.